PERSPECTIVE
THE 1970's

a quiet spot... Headwaters of BIue Creek
Six Rivers NationaI Forest

FOREST SERVICE · CALIFORNIA REGION · U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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PERSPECTIVE THE 1970's

California's twenty million acres of National Forests—one-fifth of her land area—is certainly one of her greatest environmental assets. Here is open space. These lands are the source of most of the water upon which California depends for its agricultural, industrial, and social well being. Here too are many of the scenic, recreational, and inspirational values that contribute so much to the quality of life, plus timber, grazing, mineral and other resources upon which much of economic and physical well-being depend. These lands contain a variety of environments that range from desert and dry brush in the south, to the alpine snowpack zones of the Sierra, and to the dense Douglas-fir of the coast range in the north.

ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

During the decades of the fifties and the sixties, California's National Forests moved rapidly from what was a remnant of "custodial" management towards responsive environmental management. Those years saw the development of recreational facilities to accommodate over 121,000 people at a time. They saw the development of most major elements of the Central Valley Water Development Plan and the California Water Project, with many facilities within the National Forests. They saw the annual timber harvest increase to the sustained yield capability of two billion board feet of timber each year. They saw the creation of more than 1½ million acres of classified "Wilderness," and the development of segments of Wild River, National Recreation Areas, and National Trails Systems to respond to some of the aesthetic, cultural, and recreational desires of our people.

During that rapid expansion, we in the Forest Service developed a new understanding of the environmental quality America wants along with the resources used to meet man's needs. We are sure that the demands placed on the National Forests for timber, recreation, and other resources and products must be met with greater sensitivity and environmental concern than ever before.

We now employ the skills of wildlife biologists, hydrologists, soil scientists, engineers, geologists, and landscape architects, as well as foresters trained in forest ecology, in the layout, design, and supervision of timber sales. Ski areas and other recreational facilities are carefully planned as attractive developments with the aid of landscape architects. The shape of such patches are made to "lay easy on the land" as natural openings do, using professional landscaping talents. The road system is held mostly to the ridgetops where necessary to avoid unstable soils and to protect stream channels; and our soil scientists, hydrologists, and fisheries biologists assist the engineers in designing the system to assure environmental protection as well as to monitor the results.

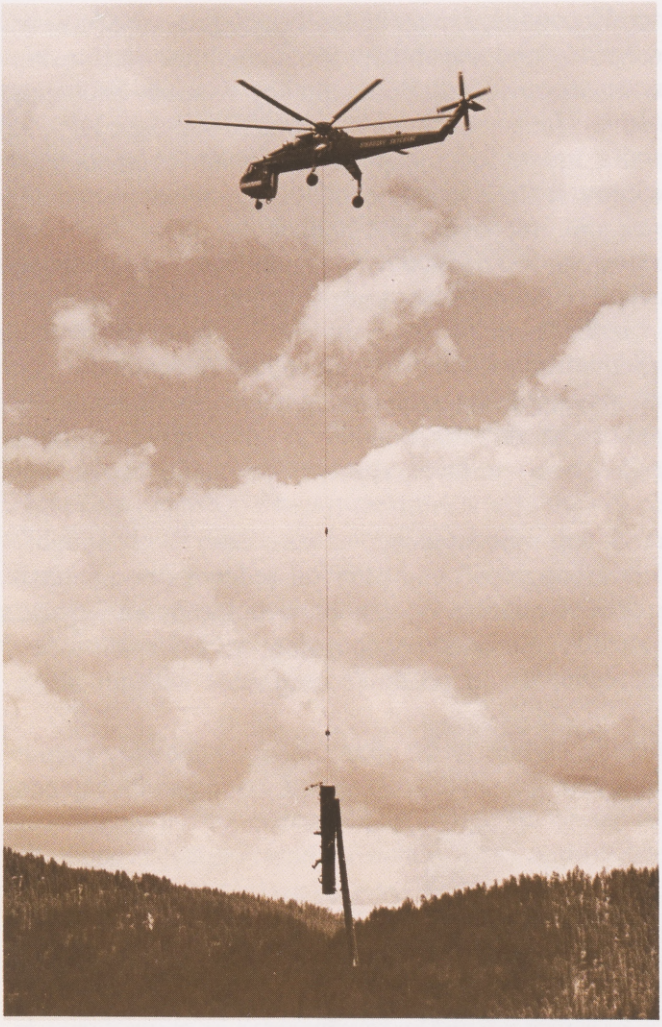
We have the general knowledge to make land management decisions that are responsive to land capability, resource interrelationship and ecosystems. But research still holds the key to many problems of the environment. There are many variations in soils, geology, in climate and in the interrelationships among plants and animals about which we know little. The relationship between timber management practices and improving the habitat for game and non-game animal species for example is a neglected research area. Research in fields that relate management programs and the environment, with their interactions, is urgently needed. Man may be the only animal with the ability, through reason, to enhance his own environment; but the evidence indicates we are very slow in discovering the basic facts and the knowledge of interrelationships upon which sound reason—and wise choices—should be based.

America's demand for new housing, as one case, is thoroughly documented. Our urban social and physical redevelopment needs are well known. The formation of new households by an expanding population already requires new housing, and the increasing use of pulp and other wood products continues without slack.

What is not generally recognized is that timber is the only important *renewable* resource for such housing and wood product needs. Most substitutes come from the exploitation of virtually non-renewable mineral sources. Their environmental impact is generally much greater than is conversion of trees to useful products.

There should be no real question as to whether timber resources should be used—except where possible "Wilderness" creation is in question. (In those instances public involvement in many forms in the decision process has contributed greatly to the quality of the decision finally arrived at.) Public support for increased timber production has been reflected in added appropriations.

But practical experience, research, and increasingly critical evaluation of results by Forest Service teams has raised many questions as to *how* the timber resource can best be used. As a result we have changed programs and practices over the years, and will continue to change as advances in understanding, technology, and research require.



In 1970, in the Plumas National Forest, we participated in the first commercial trial of helicopter logging. Results were encouraging, and another timber sale requiring helicopter logging in an area not operable by conventional logging methods was sold on April 19, 1971.

Comparable changes have evolved in recreation area development (ski area development is limited by land capability and aesthetic considerations), in range and wildlife habitat improvements, in design of water and of communication facilities, and in considering every use permitted on the public lands.

PROGRAM BALANCE

The National Forests in California offer many important environmental values. One of the first to be recognized was watershed values, which brought "Forest Reserve" status to the critically important southern California Angeles and San Bernardino National Forest areas in 1892. The seemingly inevitable sequence of fire, then flood, was recognized even then. Yet in 1970, California lost 500,000 acres to uncontrolled fires. The environmental consequences can never be tallied completely. What is the price of the millions of tons of soil displaced, the air pollution, the death of animal populations, the value of burned homes and contents, of losses in subsequent floods?

These were man-caused fires. They could have been prevented, or at least many stopped before they became conflagrations by the combining of manpower and equipment in the right place at the right time. An essential ingredient for a successful solution to the fire problem is "fuel management." Large bodies of highly flammable brush can be broken into smaller units with fuelbreaks and by the conversion of brush to grass or other lighter fuels. Fuel modification can provide feed for wildlife or livestock while providing fire crews a relatively safe place from which to combat an advancing fire. Fire protection and fire prevention programs in California's National Forests are financed at something less than 40 percent of approved strength.

Recreational programs in California National Forests in 1970 provided 44 million use days of recreational activity. Recreational visitation has been increasing at the rate of 10 percent per year.

Only one new campground is programmed for the next year. Hopefully future budget situations will allow for renewed expansion of recreational facilities. Otherwise intolerable problems of fire protection and sanitation will develop as they did in parts of California in 1970.

There are needs for similar programs for soil and water, grazing, and fish and wildlife surveys and management. Wilderness user education and a program to limit impact are needed now if the values of solitude and pristine conditions are to be protected. Programs for better management, protection, and development in these fields are needed—in balance with timber harvesting. It seems abundantly clear that the rehabilitation of the 100,000 acres in California's National Forests that are classified as high timber production sites, but are now idle as a result of early day logging and fire (much of it prior to acquisition by the Forest Service) should be speeded to completion.

We are nearing the end of the reclassification of Primitive Areas to Wilderness as directed by the Wilderness Act of 1964. California National Forests now contain 1,561,472 acres of dedicated Wilderness. The classification proposal of the Emigrant Basin (100,000 acres) is nearing completion. The 25,495-acre Agua Tibia Primitive Area is presently in active consideration. (A Public Hearing was held May 18, 1971.) The 223,000-acre Salmon-Trinity Alps and the 13,000-acre Tehipite remnant of the old High Sierra are in the process of study and public discussion, preparatory to the development of Forest Service recommendations. Completion of these studies will enable the Forest Service, Bureau of Mines, and the Geological Survey to proceed with studies and evaluation of the Golden Trout Area and any other candidate areas for possible addition to the National Wilderness Preservation System.

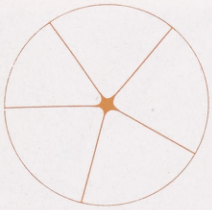
Recognition of special values, and appropriate protection and management are significant parts of the multiple use management planning process. Such planning has identified numerous areas of special values including Research Areas, the White Mountain Ancient Bristlecone Pine Forest, a California Condor Sanctuary and Wildlife Area for habitat protection of this "endangered species," scenic, botanic, geologic, speleologic, archaeologic, and other special areas. This process will continue.

Intensive timber management in the National Forests to assure a high level of productivity, with enhancement of the quality of the environment, is a challenge we must meet. Not only is it the theme of a directive from the President, it is required by the National Environmental Policy Act, and is reflected in the budget appropriations.

Yet the production of timber products alone is not the reason for having National Forests. Timber must also continue to come from commercial forest lands of private ownership. Nationally, nearly three-quarters of all commercial forest land is privately owned; and four-fifths of this, or about 60 percent of the national total, is owned by farmers and other holders of small acreages.

In California, more than half the privately owned commercial forest land is in small non-industrial forest ownerships. In this class of ownership is often found the poorest quality of management and productivity far below the land's potential.

Continued emphasis on quality timber production for the National Forests is absolutely essential. But quality and quantity is urgently needed on smaller private lands as well!

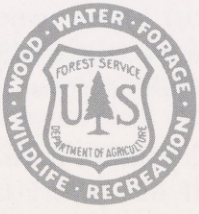


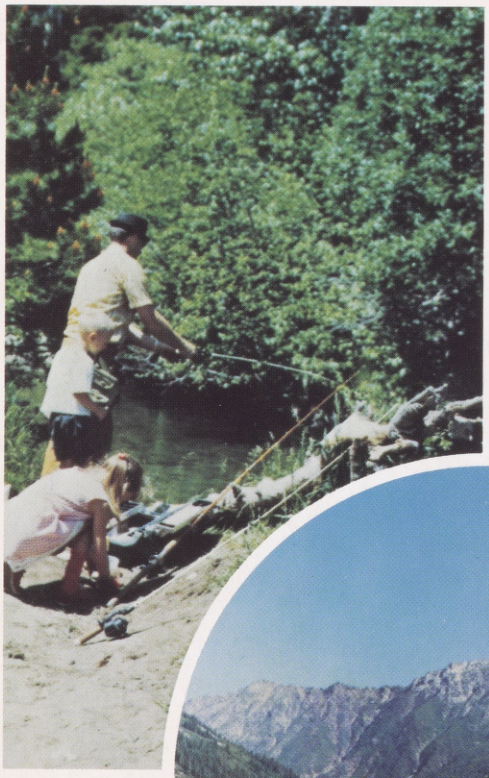
INVITATION TO INVOLVEMENT

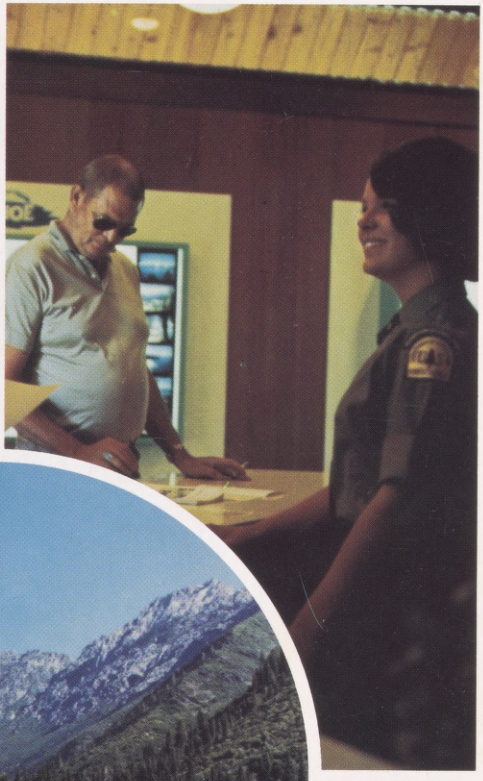
We have outlined in very broad terms the direction we believe you and other Americans are asking us to follow. This is how we "read" you. But we recognize that most of you are not so much interested in the "broad" outline as you are in the specific area where you have knowledge, interest, or expertise. And that is where we need your help. If you have expertise that can help us arrive at better land management, we truly desire your help. If you have a special concern, you need to know that any decision takes full account of that concern and knowledge. Usually there can be several possible alternative patterns of use, all of which may be in harmony with the environment. When the choice is among such alternatives, the forest officer and study team recommending a course of action need to know what choice will best meet the needs or desires of what "publics."

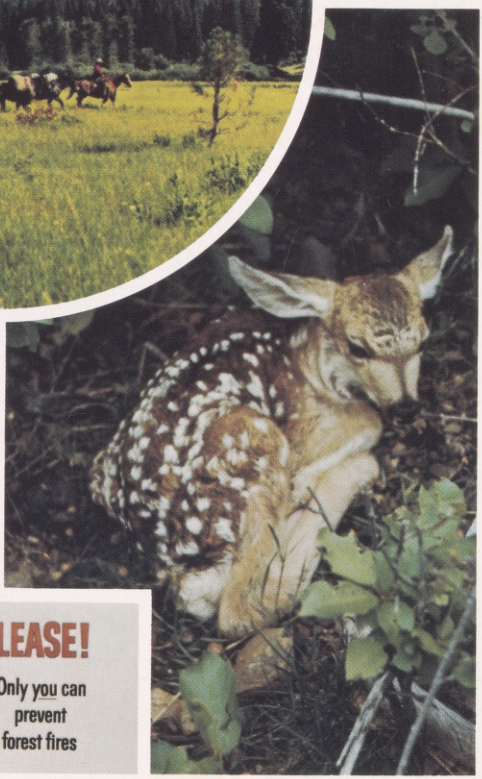
To that end, I sincerely urge all who have an interest in either a specific area or any National Forest to visit or write the district ranger or the forest supervisor for that area. You will find that he will welcome your ideas and, if they are timely, fully consider them in making the decisions that he must ultimately make. He can't agree with everyone, but he will make available to you other factors he must consider, or refer you to other sources. We ask for and depend on your help.

DOUGLAS R. LEISZ
Regional Forester









PLEASE!

Only you can prevent forest fires

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